

Education

In a year of hard cuts and even harder decisions, I have worked with others to hold the line on cuts to education. We have staved off the worst of the cuts once again, and I will continue to work to ensure that our children get the quality education they deserve. In addition to protecting education from cuts, we have enacted a series of critical education reforms that will streamline our education system along with helping Washington compete for additional federal dollars.

With the passage of SB 6696 we have enacted a robust system of teacher and principal evaluation – which will allow school districts to better know how effective those teaching our children are. Additionally, we have improved the focus and quality of the teacher certification system to ensure that we are sending prepared teachers to our schools. This proposal strikes the balance between setting a high bar for education and skill keeping the bulk of these decisions at the local level where they belong.

Green River Flooding

This past year has been a rollercoaster ride for those who live and work in the Green River valley and the state as a whole, as we all wondered if the damage to the Howard Hanson Dam would cause catastrophic flooding. I spent countless hours this past year meeting with state, federal, and local officials, as well as businesses and homeowners in the area to help protect our communities from flooding.

As both the Chair of the House Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness Committee and a member of the Governor's Executive Cabinet on the Green River Flooding issue, I am proud to report that the first temporary fix, a grout curtain to slow leakage in the weakened right abutment, has reduced the danger of a major flood from 1 in 3 each year to 1 in 25. Additionally, I am working to get the funding for a second grout curtain that will reduce this risk to 1 in 120 – what we have faced in normal years since the dam was installed.

Due to a lot of very hard work by many dedicated people, the risk now to the Green River Valley and our whole regional economy is minimal. If we can get the second grout curtain in place this summer, it looks even more promising. I will stay dedicated to this project until it is done.

In Conclusion

It has been a tough session, and no battle was harder fought than the fight to keep the Rainier School open. I worked hard with other legislative leaders, as well as state, county, and local officials to preserve this critical resource for the community. This is a war that may never be over, but we can claim victory over this battle today.

Regarding Lake Tapps, we are hopefully nearing the end of the process, but I will be vigilant to see that the final permit contains the protections for Lake Tapps that are necessary, and if they are not, to fight with the community to see that they get there in the final product.

You will soon see construction on a project that will address one of the most dangerous intersections in the 31st District. This summer construction will begin on Highway 410 between 214th and 234th, with both lane widening and a traffic signal going in, along with many other important transportation projects.

As always, it has been an honor to serve as your State Representative. Please feel free to contact me any time about any issue.

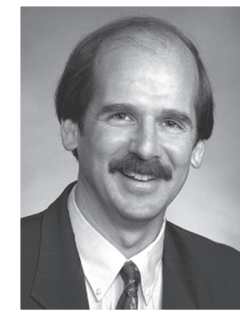
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MAY 2010
SESSION WRAP-UP

31st District
Representative

Christopher
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Christopher
HURST 31st District Representative

MAY 2010
SESSION WRAP-UP

Dear Neighbor,

Average Americans were hit with the impacts of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression caused by years of negligent federal oversight of our financial markets. Banks and investment firms took crazy risks with your money. Now a lot of it is gone, and so are the crooks who took it.

The economy turned sour, jobs were lost, home values plummeted, foreclosures skyrocketed, and the ranks of the unemployed grew. A bright spot here in Washington was our sound unemployment fund, and we granted extended benefits to those in need. Still, things got tough for us. Still, things got tough for us.

About the time we were beginning to see signs of an economic recovery, the news contained disturbing stories from around the nation - hate radio and radical extremists were urging citizens to attack other Americans for their political views. There has been violence and recently, a group of these people were arrested just before carrying out a plot to kill police officers and federal prosecutors. Extremists claim they are defending the Constitution, or even God, but in fact they are cowardly and unruly mobs. Throughout history, these simple-minded people have been around when times are tough, preying on people's emotions and difficulties.

Most folks just want to live their lives and enjoy the freedoms we have as Americans. The radical fringe on the left and right is not where we live. We live in the center. Unfortunately, many politicians have drifted to the outside edges of the political spectrum. America seems to be more polarized than ever. Americans and Washingtonians work best when we collectively share not only our problems, but collaborate on solutions, as well. Civil discourse, constructive disagreement and debate result in real solutions that serve all of us the best.

It has been my honor to serve as your State Representative. I believe that you not only expect me to represent you as best I can on issue, but also expect me to conduct myself in a way that is inclusive of all ideas and points of view. I believe that constructive political discourse in Olympia begins with me and have worked hard as Chairman of the Public Safety Committee in a bi-partisan way. This hasn't been the best of times, but better ones are on the way.

Sincerely,

Christopher Hurst
State Representative
31st Legislative District



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**31st District
Representative**

MAY 2010 SESSION WRAP-UP

Repealing I-960 & New Taxes: Bad Idea

I understand as well as anyone the gravity of the financial condition we are currently in. Need is being most keenly felt today and indeed the impacts are beyond anything we have seen since the Great Depression. Unemployment numbers don't lie. Families,

businesses, and those relying on vital government services have all seen resources being reduced to critical levels.

Also abundantly apparent is that a decade of neglect and lack of oversight of our financial markets have put us where we find ourselves today – a global financial meltdown. So great was the national outrage, citizens changed control of the White House, but make no mistake about it, their patience is short. This was not so much a departure from the Republican Party as it was a huge move to the middle. That's where most people live. Bitter and divisive politics have become so repulsive to the people that almost 40 percent of U.S. citizens today see themselves as Independents.

That is why a partisan solution will not suffice today.

I am deeply saddened that some in Olympia were single-mindedly determined to raise taxes by first suspending Initiative 960. I-960 was enacted by the people to require a two-thirds vote of the members of the House and Senate before raising new taxes, or in the alternative, to send any revenue package to the voters for their advice and consent.

The voters are not dumb. They know what they said and how they wanted their government to address what we hope will be the beginning of an economic recovery. They are also fearful that if their elected officials act wrongly and increase taxes unwisely, the recovery will be delayed or imperiled. I agree.

The problem is as much one of process as it is of substance.

I believe we have not done enough to reduce the size of some portions of government, in keeping with the financial conditions that exist today. Families have made adjustments. Businesses, both large and small, have also made adjustments. Government did not do enough before moving to a revenue option. This was an opportunity to make significant reforms in state government, and although we did make some important changes, they simply did not go far enough.

I am still troubled by the process undertaken this past session. There were two, as of yet, relatively untried processes. The first was to find a solution that could get the two-thirds vote in the Legislature. I understand the difficulties very clearly; however some of this lies in predicating a cooperative discussion upon first working together to carefully evaluate government efficiencies. Make no mistake, we have a lot of very hard working and dedicated government workers doing everything they can each day to serve their citizens. Yet middle and upper management in state government is bloated and everyone knows it.

Mark Emmert, University of Washington president, makes \$906,500 a year at a time when enrollment costs for students are increasing 14%. That isn't simply bloated, it's arrogant. Then add to that his "sacrifice" of forgoing a pay raise this year, but only in return for a \$450,000 bonus in a couple of years; he gets six

months off with pay. That's obscene and we could do better.

The second option that was available to lawmakers was to get government spending under control and then, if necessary, send a revenue package to the voters. There would have been great wisdom in this. First, it would have resulted in more diligence prior to sending a package to the voters. Secondly, the voters are deeply concerned about raising taxes right now. So am I.

Imprudent action by raising taxes could imperil our economic recovery. If the voters choose to repeal the current tax proposals, which they very well may in November, nothing is gained in the end anyway. If the tax package is repealed by the voters, and the proper efficiencies are not in place, then the problem will be far worse next January when the Legislature convenes to begin writing a new two-year biennial budget in 2011.

Therefore, I opposed and voted against both the effort to suspend I-960 and raise taxes. It's an imprudent course. We did not do everything to make government as efficient as possible. Further, we did not seriously consider the other options contained in I-960 – greater cooperation leading to a consensus of two-thirds of the Legislature, or in the alternative, seeking the support of the voters. I trust citizens have great interest in a quick economic recovery and the creation of jobs for a stronger future. So do I.

You may agree or disagree with my position on this important issue, but I wanted you to understand how I saw this issue and the reasons for the votes that I took on your behalf in Olympia.

Session Huge Victory for Criminal Justice

This Legislative Session seemed like mostly bad news – tax increases, budget woes, and a rough economy were overwhelming. However, it is a mistake to miss that this was the best public safety session in decades.

We were all in shock when a Seattle Police Officer was shot while sitting in his patrol car for no reason other than he was a law enforcement officer. Then only a short time later, four Lakewood Police Officers were killed while sitting in a local coffee shop. It didn't even seem like Washington State for a few days, but rather more like something one might expect in some crime-ridden East coast city.

Being a 25-year police veteran myself, I was deeply moved by the showing of public support for the police and surviving family members. The public response began the process of healing for everyone.

As the Chairman of the House Public Safety Committee, it fell to me to deal with this tragedy and make sure that we knew everything we possibly could, and make the changes necessary to protect police and the public. Our committee members worked tirelessly on this tremendously important task.

We strengthened laws to prohibit counties from engaging in "booking bail" – letting offenders out on bail without seeing a judge. We increased benefits for families of our fallen officers and put a constitutional amendment on the ballot this fall to allow judges to deny bail to violent offenders. There were many improvements for public safety, law enforcement, and our communities.

The police killings last year were horrific events, and we did much to keep them from happening again. In my committee, I worked extensively with my legislative colleagues, police groups, prosecutors, judges, victims' rights advocates, and the family members to advance solid proposals that will give our law enforcement

officers new tools to keep the community – and themselves, safe.

After examining the Lakewood case, we found gaps in how we handle criminals. My goal as Chair was to ensure that we passed workable laws that would make a real difference on the street and in the courtroom. Having spent a career on the streets and in courtrooms myself was helpful.

First among the critical pieces of legislation passed this year was House Joint Resolution 4220 – a proposed constitutional amendment on bail. Passed overwhelmingly, it would allow judges to deny bail when an offender faces a class A felony charge. This would have allowed a judge to keep Maurice Clemmons in jail, rather than releasing him on bail. This common-sense piece of legislation is backed by police, prosecutors, victim's rights advocates, and judges. Now you will get to vote on it in November to make it the law.

Another bill dealing with the bail system was House Bill 2625, which bans the practice of booking bail – allowing people accused of crimes to get out on standardized bail without seeing a judge, as Maurice Clemmons did. This bill requires that a person must see a judge before being released. In addition, this legislation also provides the courts with guidance on what conditions a judge needs to consider while deciding if denying bail will more adequately protect the public.

Another glaring issue with the Clemmons case and others was family members rendering criminal assistance. Under the old law, a family member helping such a criminal could only be convicted of a gross misdemeanor. Under Senate Bill 6293, a family member providing criminal assistance can now be sentenced to up to a class B felony.

Another victory was House Bill 2534 – the most drastic change to sex offender monitoring laws since the program was created. Under the old rules, offenders were required to physically go to a fixed location once each 90 days to check in. Under HB 2534, law enforcement will instead make unannounced visits of offenders' homes or places of work to ensure that they are where they are supposed to be, when they are supposed to be there. A pilot program last year resulted in 982 new arrests of sex offenders for failing to properly register or new sex offenses. Police also got 3,886 new DNA samples from sex offenders. Making this program permanent will ensure that sex offenders now know that someone is watching them.

There were other important pieces of criminal justice legislation this session, but one last example is HB 2519, which increases benefits paid to families of fallen officers. Police encounter danger to keep us safe. They accept that risk. It's important that we care for their families if they lose their lives protecting ours. HB 2519 also waives tuition for the children of fallen officers. Additionally, it removes a requirement that an officer serve ten years before being able to receive benefits – allowing police to go into harm's way, knowing that their families will be cared for without them.

This is just part of the monumental criminal justice legislation that passed this session. A lot of hard work by members of both parties made it happen. I am proud of my committee members who toiled long hours on these important issues. Partisan politics never came up. Sometimes in Olympia, the news all seems bad, and cooperation rare. Not true with public safety. Police, prosecutors and judges, now have important new tools to keep our families and communities safe because of our work this year.